

For More Information

Highways & Local Programs Division Contacts

Director
Kathleen B. Davis
(360) 705-7871
davisk@wsdot.wa.gov

Northwest Region
Ed Conyers, PE
Local Programs Engineer
(206) 440-4734
conyere@wsdot.wa.gov

Olympic Region
Neal Campbell, PE
Local Programs Engineer
(360) 357-2666
campben@wsdot.wa.gov

Southwest Region
Leon Winger, PE
Local Programs Engineer
(360) 905-2215
wingerl@wsdot.wa.gov

Eastern Region
Keith Martin, PE
Local Programs Engineer
(509) 324-6080
martink@wsdot.wa.gov

South Central Region
Roger Arms, PE
Local Programs Engineer
(509) 577-1780
armsr@wsdot.wa.gov

North Central Region
Paul Mahre, PE
Local Programs Engineer
(509) 667-3090
mahrep@wsdot.wa.gov



Engineering Services
Aaron Butters, PE
(360) 705-7375
buttera@wsdot.wa.gov

Community Design Assistance
Paula Reeves
(360) 705-7258
reevesp@wsdot.wa.gov

Scenic Byway Coordinator
Carrie Sunstrom
(360) 705-7387
sunstrc@wsdot.wa.gov

Web Site

www.wsdot.wa.gov/ta/progmgt/byways/

www.wsdot.wa.gov/ta/progmgt/grants/enhance.htm



Washington Scenic Byways

Scenic Byways

Scenic byways are roads that are distinct and recognized for their scenic, recreational, historic, cultural, and archeological qualities. They are backroads that beckon us to discover Washington's hidden gems. They may lead to spectacular destinations such as Mt. Rainier, the Grand Coulee Dam, or Washington's northwest coast, or they may be very scenic and pleasant local routes. A scenic byway is typically a corridor that has unique character and evokes a sense of place. Both the road and the surrounding landscape are recognized as a community resource.

Important to Washington

- The program preserves and highlights Washington's scenic character and heritage.
- It helps fund capital projects that carryout community goals and support the local economy.
- It encourages tourism and economic development.
- It provides a common vision that encourages collaboration and partnerships between state and federal agencies and local communities.



Mt. Baker Scenic Byway, SR 542; Photo courtesy of David Narvaez, WSDOT

Program History

The National Scenic Byway program began in 1991 as part of the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Through this program, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) establishes guidelines for designation and administers a grant program for planning and improving scenic byways.

Other federal scenic byway programs exist as well ...
The U.S. Forest Service has a scenic byway program within national forests. The Bureau of Land Management reserves special designations for Back Country Byways, and the National Park Service recognizes a distinguished collection of National Historic Trails.

Interestingly, Washington State's program predates the federal program by 24 years; it was one of the first in the country. State designation of byways is governed by RCW Chapter 47.39, which was passed in 1967. This initiative was inspired by Lady Bird Johnson's Highway Beautification Program (1965) which began the modern environmental movement. Originally, Congress designated 27 state routes (or portions of routes) based on their scenic quality. In 1993, an additional 29 routes were added to the system and six of the original routes were de-designated due to deteriorated scenic value. Today, Washington recognizes 61 scenic byways, with about 20 being supported by active byway advocacy groups.

Purpose of Program

Byway organizations form to:

- Interpret, promote, and protect scenic and other distinctive features;
- Create community driven byway management plans; and
- Develop infrastructure by completing capital projects.

Byway organizations are challenged with finding ways to enhance travelers' experiences without impacting the visual quality of the byway. They develop strategies to conserve what is special and to maintain a byway's integrity, while at the same time promote its use and enjoyment.

Core Concepts of the National Scenic Byways Program

- It is community based and grass roots driven.
- Intrinsic qualities are identified.
- A Corridor Management Plan is written.

A Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is a form of land use planning required prior to designation. It addresses scenic interpretation, development of infrastructure, resource protection and marketing.

How the Program Works

Grass Roots Effort

A grass roots initiative begins a process of forming a Byway group, then working with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to identify and document the scenic, archaeological, cultural, historic, recreational, and natural features of an area. The Byway group must demonstrate broad based local support for designation.

State Scenic Byway Designation

If eligibility criteria are met, a system for designation is completed. State designation is pursued first, then the byway group may apply for national designation when higher criteria are met.

The Three Tiers of Scenic Byway Status

All American Roads are designated by the US Secretary of Transportation. These byways are recognized nationally and internationally and are considered “destinations unto themselves”. Washington currently has two All American Roads — the Washington portion of the International Selkirk Loop (SR 20, SR 31), and the Chinook Byway (SR 410 Enumclaw to Nache).

National Scenic Byways are also designated by the US Secretary of Transportation. They are recognized nationally for their outstanding qualities. Washington has four National Scenic Byways. They are the Mountains to Sound Greenway (I-90 Seattle to Thorp), Strait of Juan de Fuca Highway (SR 112 Port Angeles to the boundary of the Makah reservation), Stevens Pass Greenway (US 2 Monroe to Peshastin), and Coulee Corridor (SR 17 and SR 155 Othello to Omak).

State Scenic Byways are designated by Washington’s Secretary of Transportation with approval from the Legislature. After Byway groups apply to the program, the State Scenic Byway Coordinator, along with a team of experts, evaluates the route to determine if it meets criteria for outstanding and unique intrinsic qualities.

A Word From Our National Scenic Byway Leaders

Mountains to Sound Greenway Byway Leader Nancy Keith

The Mountains to Sound Greenway links Washington’s largest metropolitan areas to dramatic scenery, regional historic sites, and hundreds of miles of hiking and biking trails and outdoor recreation areas. It’s found along Washington’s main east/ west highway. The 100-mile Greenway begins at the Seattle waterfront and links city parks and trails to Interstate 90 through the Cascade Mountains to the central Washington town of Thorp. With broad support from public and private sectors, over 200,000 acres of lush forests, farms, lakes, and rivers have been added to public ownership for conservation of this scenic corridor since 1991.



Mountains to Sound Greenway, I-90

Coulee Corridor Byway Leader Tim Alling

The Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway, 150 miles along Washington State Routes 17 and 155, from Othello to Omak is more than just a scenic road. It is a road with stories to tell. The central narratives come from many sources; geologic forces, native peoples, diverse immigrants, varied flora and fauna, and the small and grand dreams of human habitation. Within the corridor’s diverse landscapes and stories there’s a defining feature: they are all connected by and to water. A bit ironic since this is a semi arid region. But then irony and contrast are elements of good stories.



Dry Falls Overlook, Coulee Corridor; Photo courtesy of Teri Pieper

International Selkirk Loop Byway Leader Carol Graham

This unique National Scenic Byway traverses beautiful remote mountain valleys, following waterways formed when the glaciers receded thousands of years ago. Follow this Loop Route starting in the northeastern corner of Washington, through the northern panhandle of Idaho, and the southern British Columbia region known as the Kootenay Rockies. Spend a few days or a week exploring this 280 mile Loop with the bonus of an additional 450 miles of side Loops (we call them Super Side Trips). Ride North America’s longest free ferry in BC, glimpse a glacier, or enjoy exceptional shopping in the many small arts communities. Outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, golfing, camping, and kayaking are just some of the pleasures that await your visit.



International Selkirk Loop; North Pend Oreille Scenic Byway

Chinook Pass Byway Leader Trip Hart

Anchored by majestic Mount Rainier, the Chinook Scenic Byway traverses the mighty Cascade Range between Enumclaw and Naches along State Route 410. Travelers experience a dramatic change in landscape as they drive between the west half, characterized by dense forests and rich vegetative habitat, and the arid east side with volcanic formed talus and basaltic rock. Although closed during winter, the summit has breath-taking views of Mount Rainier, wildflowers, and alpine scenery. Opportunities abound throughout the corridor for hiking, camping, fishing, and many other recreational pursuits. Enjoy this relaxing drive of unique and awe inspiring beauty.

Strait of Juan de Fuca Byway Leader Sandra Balch

The Strait of Juan de Fuca Highway is all about the water. Water sustains the green wilderness. Water provided for the Makah and Elwha tribes. Water brought explorers, homesteaders, and timber companies to the area. Today the water still offers many recreational opportunities to the traveler. Hike, bike, and horseback the trails. Canoe, kayak, surf, and fish the waterways. Explore the beaches, birding, and wildlife. Or you can drive along the scenic shoreline of the Strait of Juan de Fuca Highway. Relax, enjoy ... drive it, experience it!



Strait of Juan de Fuca Highway, SR 112; Photo courtesy of Curt Warber

Recognition, Not Regulation

The Scenic Byways program is about recognition, not regulation. Washington chooses to implement outdoor advertising controls, thus preserving the scenic quality of the roadside. FHWA’s National Scenic Byway Program will only award transportation dollars to projects along routes that adhere to the Federal Highway Beautification Act of 1965. Federal law 23 USC 131 bans billboards along Federal Interstate and Federal-aid Primary routes designated as scenic byways. Locally, Washington’s law is the Scenic Vista’s Act enacted in 1971, RCW 47.42.

Grant Funding and Technical Assistance

National Scenic Byway grants are available on an annual basis. Traditionally, Washington funds about eight projects each year.

Transportation Enhancement grants are another funding source to which scenic byway groups, and others, may apply.

Technical assistance for scenic byways is offered through the Community Design Assistance branch of WSDOT’s Highways and Local Programs Division, in Olympia, Washington.